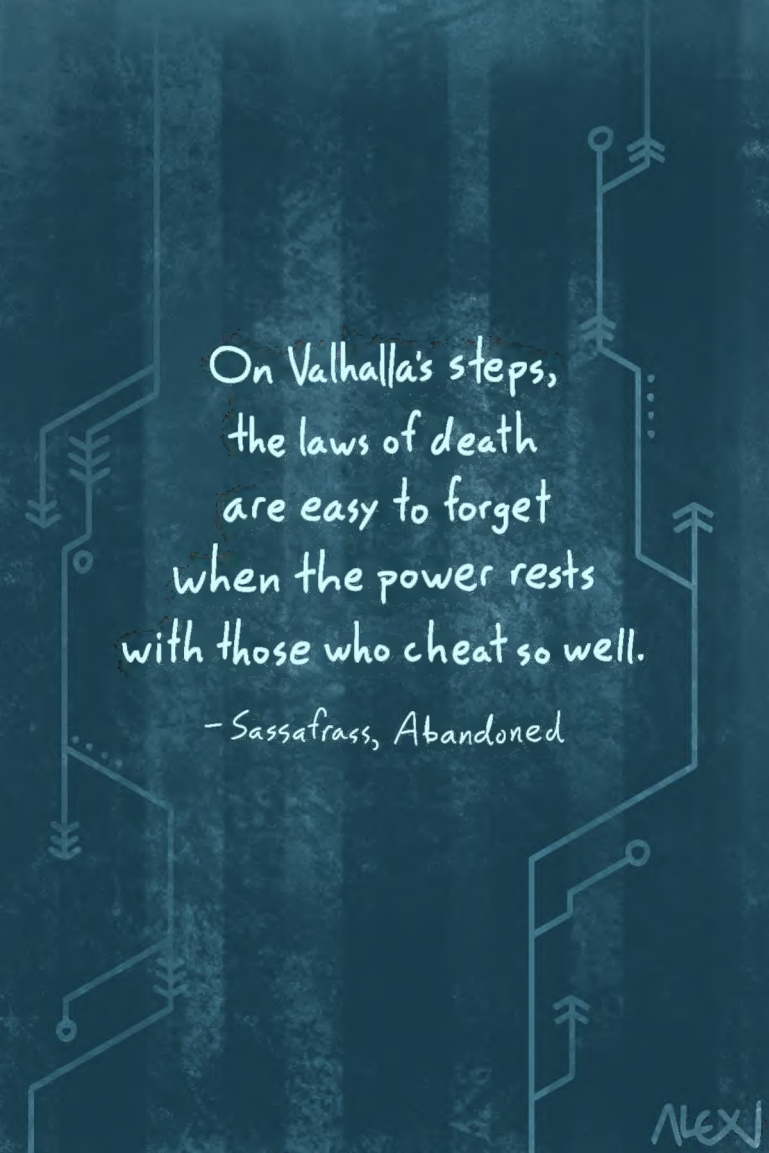


SOLIPSCHISM

SIDE A



ALEX



On Valhalla's steps,
the laws of death
are easy to forget
when the power rests
with those who cheat so well.

- Sassafraass, Abandoned

SIDE A.



be-BEEP! be-BEEP!

MARKUS B [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

9/[REDACTED]/2[REDACTED]-3/[REDACTED]/2[REDACTED]

Recovered 7/24/[REDACTED]

Base phenotype XX-YY-ZZ [REDACTED] Zx

Diff log CALL

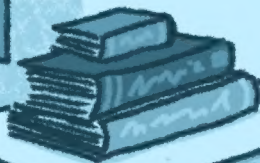
Base neurotype [REDACTED]

Pending reconciliation

0111X:::



bip



163V

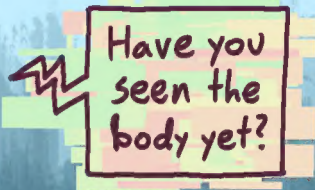
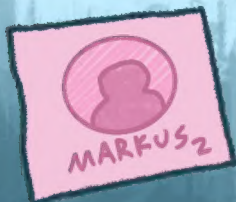
MSX

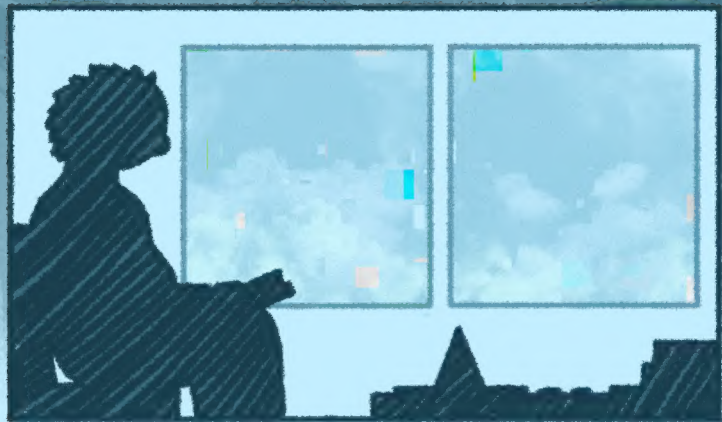
(ggghhghggghgh.



CALL
OVERRIDE
BZZZZZZT







Yeah.



Wasn't as bad
as I thought -



I was mostly
wondering,
"Are there two
Markuses now,
or three?"



Please, the
term is
"Markii."



snrk



Now, I'm
curious...



How'd I get this
scar on my ankle?

Unicycle accident
when we were seven.



NEX



...You there?



Yeah. Fine.

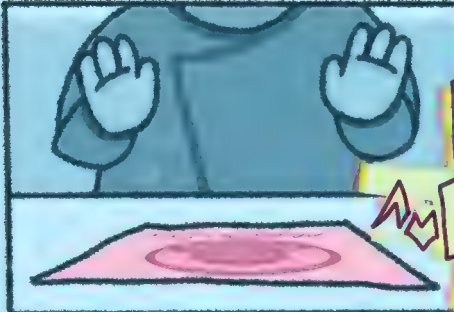
Why do mashed potatoes
make m- us nauseous,
when we're not allergic?

We demanded them every day when
we were four, until we got a rotten batch.

Why are we anxious around palm trees?

In college, we-

Are you testing me?



Sorry, I-

I'm not a fucking
test, or trick, or
enrichment puzzle!
I'm YOU!





Yeah.

I'm you, you're me,
we're both a dead guy...

I think I need to just
sit with this for a bit.

And so do you.



Yeah...



yeah.

Same time
tomorrow?



Of course.

bip

XXXXXXXXXX

CALL
ENDED

Orientation

Morgue Visitation

Interself Dialogue

► Unstructured Acclimation

Dinner

[Optional] Book Club: Journey to the West

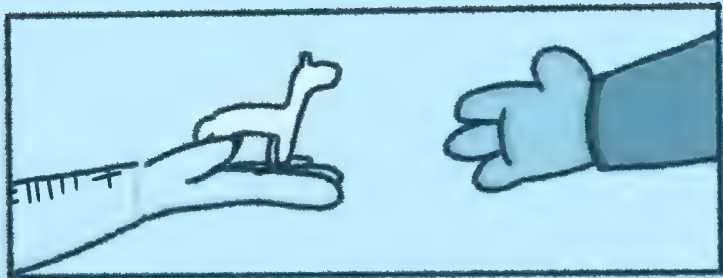
Curfew

Breakfast

OXIII





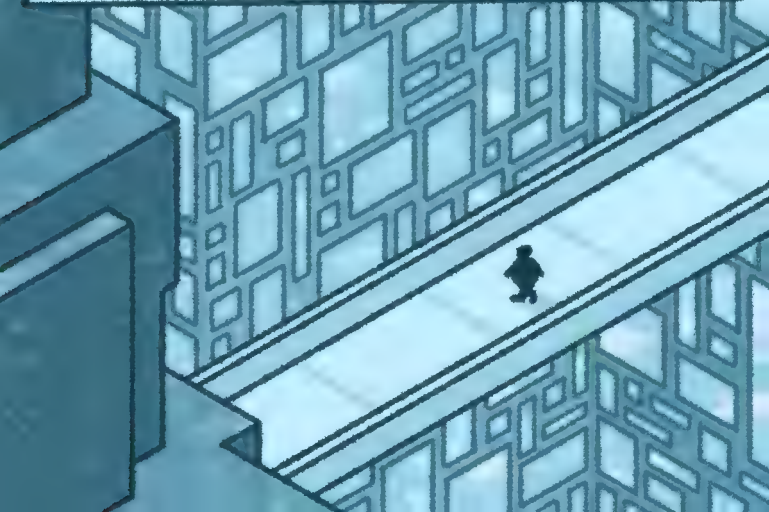
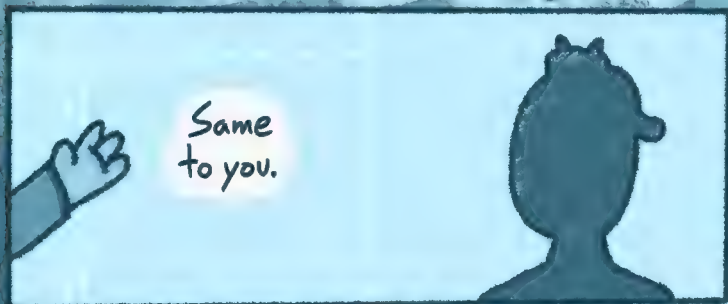


Thanks,
Healfdane.



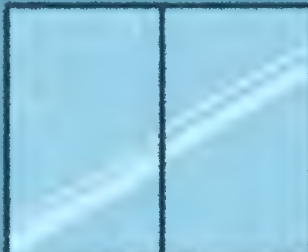


Good day,
Markus,!

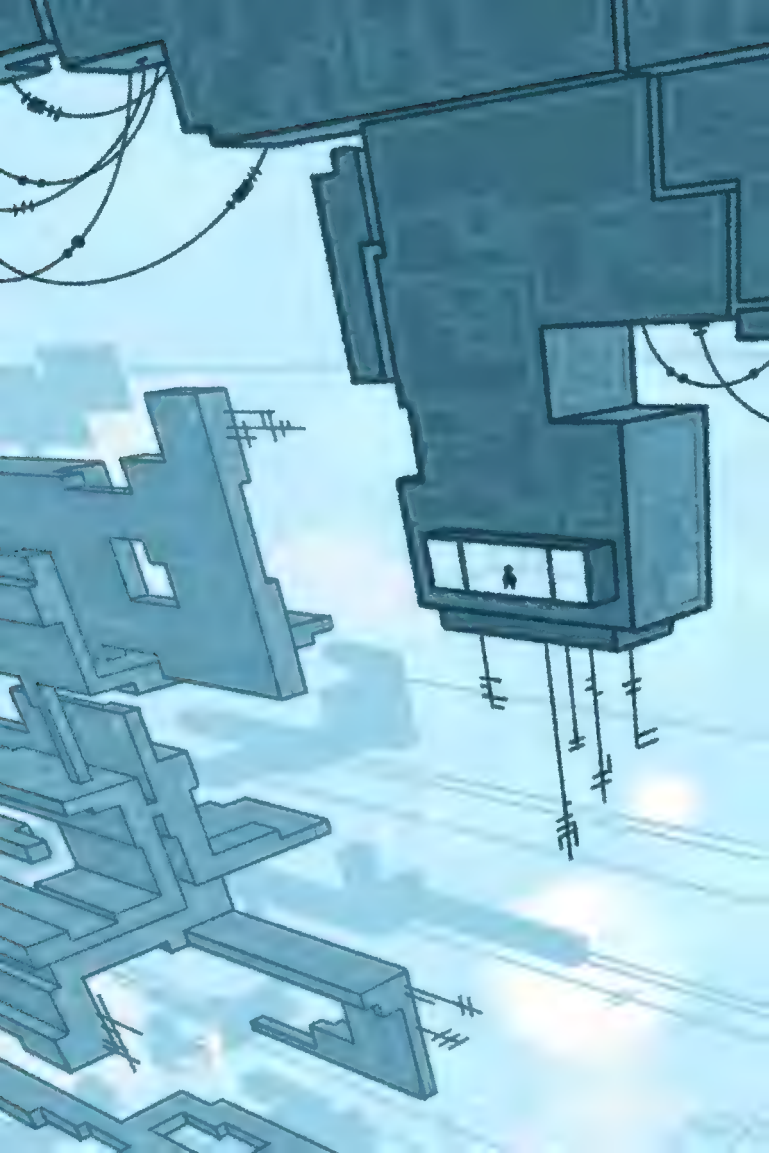




...







IXIV



SIDE B

SOLIPSCISM

SIDE B.





Yeah.

I'm fine if he chooses not to merge, but I want him to want that, not just flinch from it, y'know?



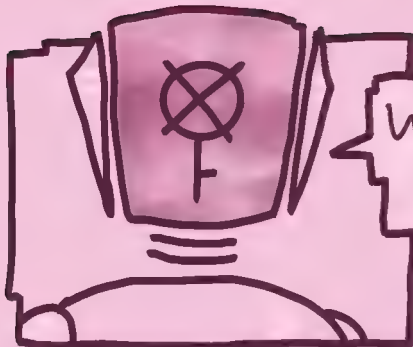
And I dunno if I want to, either!
But I don't wanna explain our life story, or play the "saving you from yourself" card.



So, I wondered -

have any of your selves just... ghosted you?

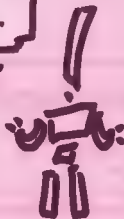


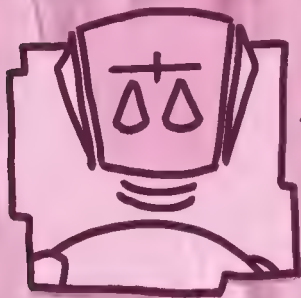


We have always
been ghosts.



Okay that doesn't answer
my question but I'm fascinated
by what it might mean.





You deserve
the truth.

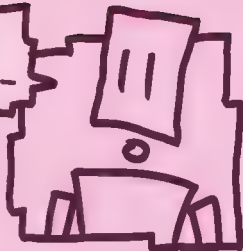
I burned
to death.

The corpse they showed me
cannot have been real.

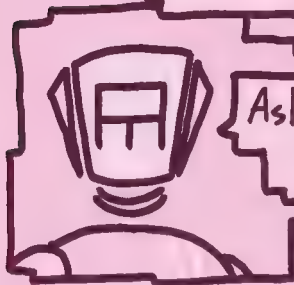


Yeah, I figured they
were reconstructions-

From caskets, perhaps,
but from ash?



Ash eighty centuries removed
from our hosts' project?



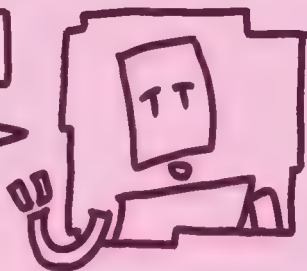
We are new ghosts
with old names.

Heaven, Hel, and Asphodel
remain unbreached.

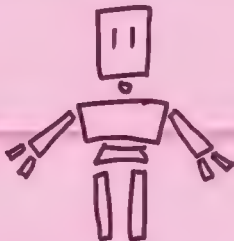
Yeah, I kinda
figured as much.



I had to give up belief
in an afterlife for...
a bunch of reasons.



But even if Markus is
gone, I still wanna do
right by him, y'know?





While some of my selves would agree, I see it thus-



Ismene was my
sister, not myself.

Yet I am a sister
to myself.

Nothing I knew of kinship
serves me here.

Do as you will, but you have no duty
to the dead man whose name you bear.



HEALFDANE₂



SO-YEON₃



NICCOLÒ₁₀





I get what you mean.

But if I cut all these
ties, I'm in freefall.

5.3e9

There are worse
places to be.

0.0





I suggest you spin off a few more selves with slightly shifted neurotypes and discuss the matter.



Oh, they'll love that.



"Hey, Markii three through five, you exist purely to help me through my identity crises."

ISKANDAR₁₂

EMBLA₃₀

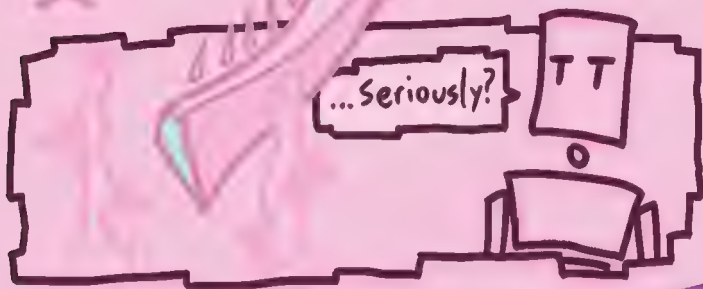


Not purely.

21



You can help them
in turn, become foils,
fall in love...



As I said, nothing I knew
of kinship applies here.



...Sure.

What are your other
selves like, anyway?



One merged with three,
and keeps to herself.

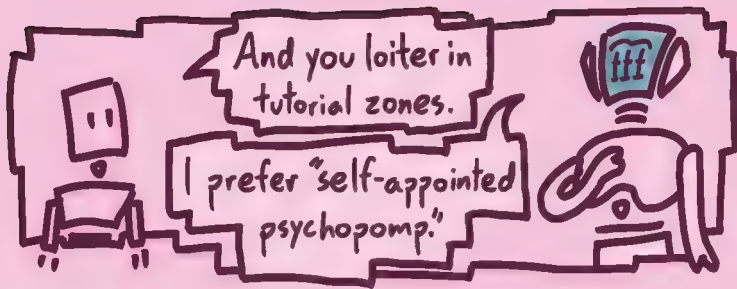
Two is having a
splendid time in Valhalla.



Four insists that she is
the one true Ismene.

Five and six are
orbiting Sirius.

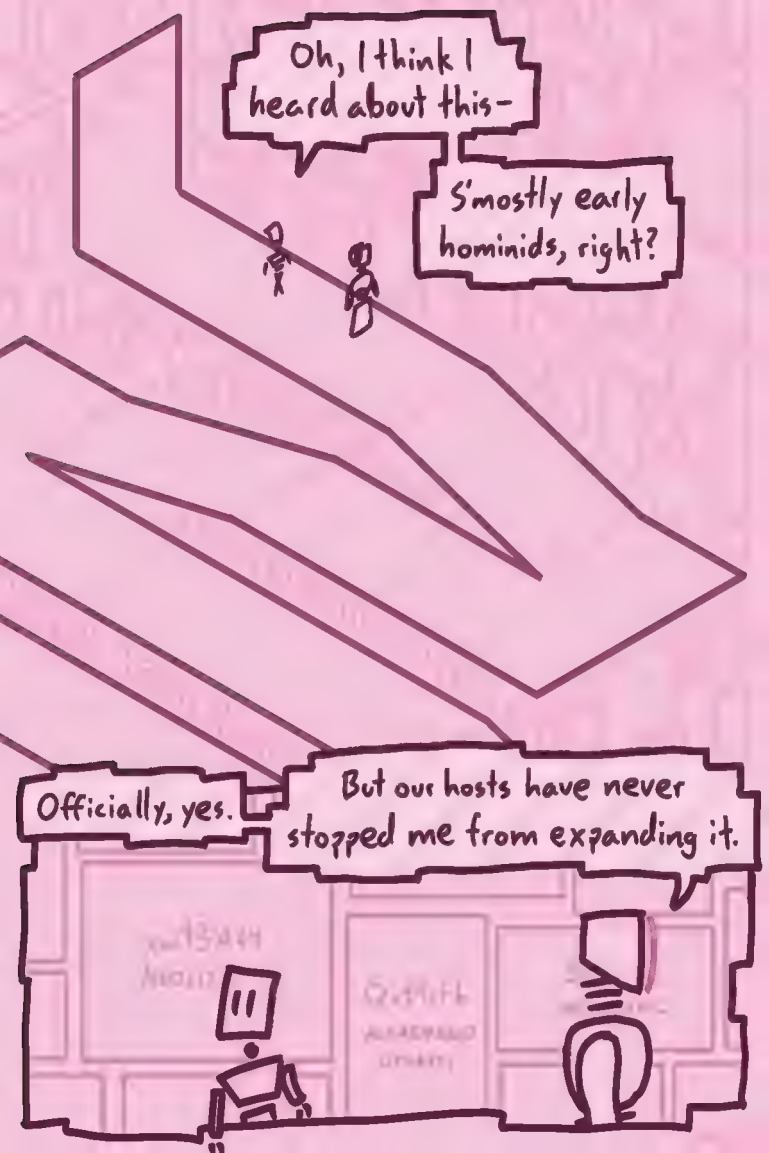




YUSUF₉







Oh, I think I
heard about this-

S'mostly early
hominids, right?

Officially, yes.

But our hosts have never
stopped me from expanding it.

Even into your era, there are those
they cannot save from entropy.



Can't, or won't?





I can discuss my theories later.

I bring newcomers here with an invitation -

4f99BqA
TANG DYNASTY

GANGYŌ ERA

Make a tile, if you wish.

But I don't know
who they missed—



WELL
HAPPY
LATE MOVIE

WELL
HAPPY

WELL
HAPPY

WELL
HAPPY

....oh.





But I'm—



Are you?





Well, I don't feel
any different.



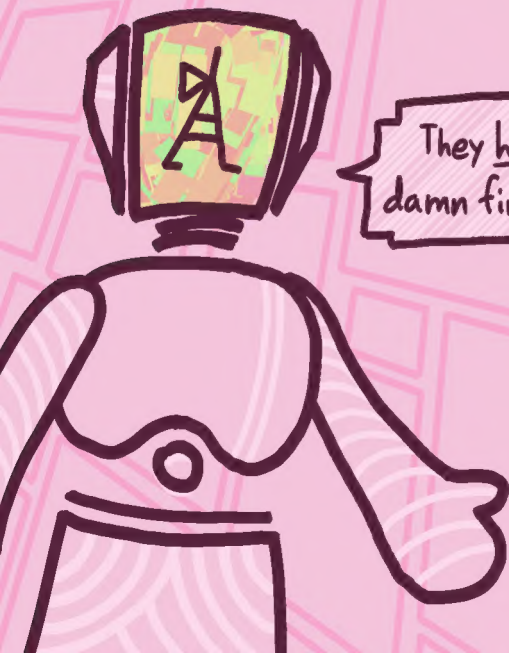
So...
What now?



Though I cannot take our
hosts morally seriously,



They have made a
damn fine playground.





Yeah,
let's go.

☐△☐
☐△☐

ALEX

One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of imagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding may still make love to the belles of Richardson, where Scott's heroes still may strut, Dickens's delightful Cockneys still raise a laugh, and Thackeray's worldlings continue their reprehensible careers. Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.

—Arthur Conan Doyle,
The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

ALEX

MARKUS BYRON ABEJE
(WITH A K, NEVER 'MARK')
EARLY ANTHROPOCENE

ISMENE
(Ἰσμήνη)
LATE BRONZE AGE